

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 INR-10 L-03 ACDA-12  
NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 SP-02 ICA-11 TRSE-00 /072 W  
-----044327 191710Z /53  
R 191627Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6315  
INFO SECDEF WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: UK MPOL MILI NATO  
SUBJECT: FINANCIAL TIMES ARTICLE ON GREENHAM COMMON

REF: LONDON 7879

1. SUMMARY. ARTICLE BY FINANCIAL TIMES POLITICAL EDITOR MALCOLM RUTHERFORD ON USAF DESIRE TO BASE KC-135 TANKERS IN UK, WHILE CRITICAL OF WAY ISSUE HAS BEEN HANDLED BY US AND UK AUTHORITIES, IS RELATIVELY ACCURATE AND DISPASSIONATE ACCOUNT AND MAKES HELPFUL SUGGESTION THAT RAF VACATE SUFFICIENT FACILITIES AT BRIZE-NORTON TO ACCOMMODATE AMERICAN AIRCRAFT. COMMENT: ESCALATION OF PUBLIC INTEREST IN ISSUE MAKES EARLY DECISION BY US AND UK OFFICIALS EVEN MORE IMPERATIVE.

2. POLITICAL EDITOR MALCOLM RUTHERFORD'S STORY IN THE MAY 19 ISSUE OF THE FINANCIAL TIMES UNDER THE HEADLINE "BATTLE OF GREENHAM COMMON" PRESENTS AN INTERESTING AND RELATIVELY ASTUTE DESCRIPTION OF THE EMOTIONALLY CHARGED ISSUE OF REACTIVATION OF GREENHAM COMMON FOR USE BY USAF KC-135 TANKER AIRCRAFT. EARLY IN THE STORY HE STATES THAT "....THE CASE HAS NOT BEEN WELL HANDLED EITHER BY PARTS OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT OR BY THE US  
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ADMINISTRATION. AT NO STAGE DOES ANY ATTEMPT SEEM TO HAVE BEEN MADE IN PUBLIC TO EXPLAIN WHY THE AIRCRAFT ARE NEEDED OR WHICH ARE THE BASES UNDER CONSIDERATION ..." HE POINTS OUT THAT THE OPPOSITION IS NOT ANTI-AMERICAN, ANTI-NATO, OR ANTI-DEFENSE BUT REACTING TO BUREAUCRATIC MUDDLING AND SECRECY. RUTHERFORD SAYS THAT A YEAR AGO A FORMER 3RD AF COMMANDER TOLD THE

NEWBURY MP ABOUT PLANS TO REACTIVATE THE BASE "IN CONFIDENCE" WHILE NOT INFORMING THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, WHICH CONTINUED TO DENY KNOWLEDGE OF THE AMERICAN PLANS, AND HAD ACTUALLY ENCOURAGED THE BELIEF THAT THE BASE WOULD NOT BE REACTIVATED, UNTIL A FORMAL REQUEST WAS RECEIVED FROM THE US IN JANUARY OF THIS YEAR; ".... WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE HAS BEEN AN OUTBREAK OF FEELING SO STRONG THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT CAN ALLOW THE AMERICANS TO GO AHEAD...."

3. AFTER DESCRIBING THE NATURE OF THE OPPOSITION'S COMPLAINTS, I.E., NOISE AND SAFETY IN CONJUNCTION WITH EXTENSIVE BUILDUP OF HOMES AND SCHOOLS IN THE SURROUNDING AREA, TO WHICH RUTHERFORD SAYS THE GOVERNMENT IS SYMPATHETIC, HE STATES THAT THE US HAS BEEN ASKED TO CONSIDER ALTERNATE SITES AND "...THE SAME SORT OF LOCAL PROTEST HAS NOW BROKEN OUT AT THE MOST OBVIOUS ALTERNATIVE: FAIRFORD IN THE COTSWOLDS..." HE EXPLAINS THAT THE AMERICANS REALLY WANT A "BASE THAT CAN BE MADE AVAILABLE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AT THE LEAST POSSIBLE EXPENSE", AND THAT THE "FIRST AND PREFERRED CANDIDATE WAS BRIZE NORTON IN OXFORDSHIRE"; BUT IT IS NOW FULLY UTILIZED BY THE RAF. HE GOES ON TO MENTION THAT LINCOLNSHIRE MPS HAVE SAID THAT AREA WOULD WELCOME THE TANKERS.

4. RUTHERFORD THEN REVIEWS THE CURRENT SITUATION WHERE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE USAF AND RAF ARE JOINTLY RE-EVALUATING A SHORT LIST OF POSSIBLE BASES; I.E., BRIZE NORTON, GREENHAM COMMON, FAIRFORD, AND WADDINGTON, AND THE TIME AND COST ASSOCIATED WITH EACH. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDES BY SAYING ALL THE "PROBLEMS OUGHT TO BE SOLUBLE" AND THAT THE LEADERS OF THE PROTEST MOVEMENTS HAVE SAID THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO DROP THEIR OPPOSITION IF IT WERE DEMONSTRATED THAT THERE WERE A CLEAR STRATEGIC NEED FOR THE (PARTICULAR) BASE". RUTHERFORD OFFERS HIS SOLUTION WHICH IS "...FOR THE RAF TO GIVE UP PART OF BRIZE NORTON AND REDEPLOY PART OF ITS FORCES IN LINCOLNSHIRE, THUS GETTING THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS..." HE ENDS WITH THE MORAL THAT MORE OPEN CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT MIGHT HAVE PAID DIVIDENDS IN THIS CASE.

5. COMMENT: RUTHERFORD'S ARTICLE IS SIGNIFICANT FOR TWO REASONS: (A) HE IS POLITICAL EDITOR OF ONE OF BRITAIN'S TOP QUALITY NEWSPAPERS WITH NO KNOWN PERSONAL AX TO GRIND, AND (B) HE RECEIVED AN EXTENSIVE BRIEFING ON THE ISSUE FROM MOD/UK DURING PREPARATION OF THE STORY AND THUS IT IS POSSIBLE, EVEN LIKELY, THAT MOD/UK VIEWS ARE REFLECTED THEREIN. THE SUGGESTION REGARDING BRIZE NORTON, WHETHER IT ORIGINATED WITH RUTHERFORD OR WAS INSPIRED BY MOD/UK, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COULD BE HELPFUL. THE RAF COULD RELOCATE NON-FLYING UNITS FROM BRIZE-NORTON TO WADDINGTON (OR ELSEWHERE) AT COMPARATIVELY LITTLE COST, FREEING UP FACILITIES AT THIS FIRST-CLASS BASE FOR THE KC-135S. IN ANY EVENT, THE LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES A FEW DAYS AGO OPPOSING FAIRFORD AND NOW A MAJOR PIECE IN ONE OF BRITAIN'S MOST RESPECTED AND INFLUENTIAL DAILY NEWSPAPERS REINFORCES THE NEED FOR AN URGENT DECISION, AS OUR RECENT MESSAGES ON THE SUBJECT HAVE STRESSED. DAO IS FORWARDING THE FULL TEXT OF THE RUTHERFORD ARTICLE TO DIA AND HAS CABLED A SUMMARY TO MILITARY ADDRESSEES.

STREATOR

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